

VZCZCXYZ0000
RR RUEHWEB

DE RUEHGB #1040/01 0891141
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
R 301141Z MAR 06
FM AMEMBASSY BAGHDAD
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 3627
INFO RHMFISS/HQ USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC
RHEHAAA/WHITE HOUSE WASHDC
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L BAGHDAD 001040

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

CODEL

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/29/2016
TAGS: [MOPS](#) [MARR](#) [PHUM](#) [PGOV](#) [IZ](#)
SUBJECT: CODEL WARNER MEETING AT MINISTRY OF DEFENSE

Classified By: ACTING POLMIL COUNS Evan G. Reade for
reasons 1.4 (a) and (d)

11. (SBU) SUMMARY: In a meeting March 21 with CODEL Warner, Defense Ministry,s Lieutenant General Nasir Abadi reported the Iraqi military is making great progress and increasingly taking the lead in field operations. He took exception to CODEL Warner,s suggestion that ethno-sectarian violence poses a greater threat to Iraq than terrorism and denied that Iraq is headed toward a civil war. He assured the CODEL that the Iraqi Army is in control of Baghdad, including Sadr City. While admitting militias are a threat, Abadi stressed that efforts are being made to integrate them into the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF). He also believes that as the ISF gains the confidence of the people and the economy picks up, the militias will "go away." When asked what he sees as the primary challenges to securing Iraq, Abadi pointed to the police forces and the judicial system.
END SUMMARY.

Iraqi Military Making Great Strides

12. (SBU) On March 21, 2006, Sen. John Warner (R-VA), Sen. Carl Levin (D-MI), Sen. Jeff Sessions (R-AL), Sen. Jesse Bingaman (D-NM), Sen. Craig Thomas (R-WY), and Sen. Ken Salazar (D-CO) called on Commander of the Iraqi Joint Forces LTG Nasir Abadi. Sen. Warner began by noting that most U.S. news coverage on Iraq is negative and increasing numbers of Americans want our forces to withdraw from Iraq sooner rather than later. Abadi responded by focusing on what he believes are the positive developments. He outlined the progress being made by the Iraqi Armed Forces in terms of training, leading operations, and occupying their own battle space. He stressed that most of Iraq is secure, as fourteen of the eighteen provinces are considered safe. Abadi said the Ministry of Defense (MoD) stands ready for the USG to draw down a substantial number of troops by the end of the year.

State of Ethno-Sectarian Violence

¶3. (SBU) Sen. Warner asked Abadi what he thought of U.S. CENTCOM Commanding General Abizaid's recent statement that ethno-sectarian violence is a source of greater concern than the insurgency in Iraq. Abadi responded that the media is exaggerating the situation. The real problems faced by Iraqis are not sectarian, but al-Qaida elements who are trying to foment civil war. They are the ones responsible for such acts of terror as the Samarra mosque bombing that led to reprisal attacks against Sunni Arabs and their religious sites. He further surmised that a civil war is not likely in Iraq as all the major Iraqi tribes consist of both Sunni and Shia. Abadi described how Sunni and Shia live together as neighbors in many parts of Iraq. Many Iraqi families have intermarried, meaning that Sunni and Shia live under the same roofs. He, himself, is a Sunni-Shia from a mixed village in the south.

State of Baghdad Violence

¶4. (SBU) When asked if the violence in Baghdad is out of control as reported in the media, Abadi responded no. He claimed violence raged in parts of the city immediately after the bombing of the Samarra mosque, but now things are returning to normal. He said crime statistics kept by Ministry of Interior (MoI) bear this out. Abadi went on to stress that the Iraqi Army is in complete control of Baghdad, including Sadr City, and mans 136 checkpoints on the periphery of Baghdad and 112 within Baghdad. When asked if the army works well with the police, Abadi said cooperation and coordination are improving.

Status of Militias

¶5. (SBU) Sen. Levin asked Abadi about the threat posed by militias. Abadi replied militias are a concern, particularly Moqtada al-Sadr's Jaysh al-Mahdi (JAM). However, he was confident that the ISF and Coalition Forces (CF) are strong enough to handle any problems that might arise from the militias. He further believes that as the economy picks up and people gain confidence in the ISF, militias will go away.

Challenges to a Secure Iraq

¶6. (SBU) When asked what were the major challenges to creating a secure Iraq, Abadi pointed to the police service and the judicial system. He stated the police are under trained, overwhelmed and need much more Coalition supervision. He is hopeful that in this year, the Year of the Police as announced by Commanding General Casey, the necessary training, equipment, and mentorship will be provided to bring the police up to standard. Abadi sees the judicial system as "broken." He went on to describe Iraqi judges as corrupt, incompetent, and easily intimidated. He opined that the judicial system is slow

in investigating and prosecuting MoD cases,
and that in general, Ministry of Justice
(MoJ) officials are
uncooperative partners in security.

COMMENT

¶7. (C) Abadi's comments about the state
of Baghdad security, ethno-sectarian violence,
and militias were overly optimistic. He
somewhat misled the CODEL when he stated
the Iraqi Army is in charge of Baghdad,
as this simply is not the case. Responsibility
for patrolling different sectors
of Baghdad is shared among MoD, MoI, and
MNF-I forces. And security in Sadr City
remains problematic with the presence of JAM.

¶8. (SBU) Several of the senators were
disappointed that MinDef Dulime did not
host the meeting, and were further mystified
to find the Ministry building practically
empty of staff during the middle of the work
week. When Sen. Warner asked why the place
was like a "mausoleum", EmbOff explained
it was a holiday for both Shia and Kurds.
Warner did not seem to accept this as
rationale, responding that Iraq is in
the middle of a war and those at the heart of
its defense establishment should not be taking
days off.

¶9. (SBU) CODEL Warner did not have the
opportunity to clear this cable before departing
Iraq.

KHALILZAD